



U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

– CHAIRWOMAN MAXINE WATERS –

FACT SHEET: THE ENDING HOMELESSNESS ACT OF 2021

Bill Summary: This bill would end homelessness and significantly reduce poverty in America by transforming the Housing Choice Voucher program into a federal entitlement so that every household who qualifies for assistance would receive it.

The Need for Legislation: Since 2016, homelessness has increased by more than 5%.¹ More than 580,000 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2020.² Increases in homelessness among some of the most fragile populations have been especially dramatic: for the first time since HUD began conducting a point-in-time count in 2005, unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness now outnumber those who were sheltered, with the key driver being persons with chronic patterns of homelessness.³ The pandemic has only made this worse, as millions of families across the country lost their livelihoods.⁴ Families of color have been particularly hard hit and continue to experience disproportionate rates of housing instability and homelessness.⁵

When it comes to housing, America lacks the equivalent of the food stamps program, which, as a federal entitlement, kicks in as an automatic economic stabilizer to help American families afford food when they experience a sudden, drastic loss of income. By comparison, if someone is experiencing homelessness or housing instability, they essentially have to roll the dice and hope that they are lucky enough to get help; today, 4 out of 5 households who qualify for a Housing Choice Voucher are turned away.

The Solution: The Ending Homelessness Act of 2021 provides a comprehensive plan to ensure that every person experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in America has an affordable place to call home. The bill would:

- expand and transform the Housing Choice Voucher program into a federal entitlement that would be phased in over eight years;
- prohibit landlords from discriminating against renters based on source of income and veteran status;
- appropriate \$10 billion in funding over 5 years for the Housing Trust Fund and McKinney Vento grants to fund the creation of permanent affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness;
- provide funding for outreach and case management to connect persons experiencing homelessness to needed services, as well as for technical assistance to help states and local jurisdictions better align their healthcare and housing strategies;
- permanently authorize the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which authorizes the main homeless assistance grant programs under HUD's jurisdiction; and,
- permanently authorize the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which serves a critical role in coordinating the overall federal strategy to end homelessness.

All in all, this bill is projected to fund the creation of 410,000 new units of housing for people experiencing homelessness and effectively end widespread homelessness and housing instability. Columbia University researchers also project that this bill would lift 9 million people out of poverty, reduce child poverty by over a third, and decrease racial disparities in poverty rates among Black and White households.

¹ HUD, AHAR Reports (accessed July 13, 2021).

² HUD Office of Community Planning, [The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\) to Congress](#), (Jan. 2021).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [COVID Hardship Watch](#) (updated July 12, 2021).

⁵ *Id.*

Stakeholder Support: The National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Alliance to End Homelessness, Catholic Charities USA, Children’s Defense Fund, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Fair Housing Alliance, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, National Women’s Law Center, National Leased Housing Association, National Housing Law Project, National Network to End Domestic Violence, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Arc of the United States, National Coalition for the Homeless, National Partnership for Women and Families, Housing Assistance Council, Center for Disability Rights, True Colors United, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, National Manufactured Home Owners Association, Food Research & Action Center, Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force, Church World Service, Center for Law and Social Policy, Coalition on Human Needs, LeadingAge, Grounded Solutions Network, PolicyLink, RESULTS, Funders Together to End Homelessness, Hispanic Federation, Union for Reform Judaism, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, Low Income Investment Fund, Steward of Affordable Housing for the Future, National Association of County Community and Economic Development, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, Hunger Free America, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, National Homelessness Law Center, National Community Development Association, National Housing and Rehabilitation Association, National Housing Resource Center, National Housing Trust, National Innovation Service, National Resource Center for Domestic Violence, National Center for Housing and Child Welfare, Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research, ZERO TO THREE, Youth Collaboratory, Treatment Communities of America, National Council for Independent Living, National Coalition for Latinx with Disabilities, National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations, Justice in Aging, Jewish Women International, HerStory Ensemble, Hearth Inc., Consumer Action, Affordable Homeownership Foundation Inc, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Center for American Progress, Coalition of Labor Union Women AFL-CIO, Community Solutions, National Alliance of HUD Tenants, Public Citizen, Center for Community Progress, National Association of Social Workers, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders, National Association of Local Housing Finance Agencies, National Coalition for Housing Justice, National Council of Jewish Women, National Disability Rights Network, National Organization for Women, National WIC Association, Professional Association of Social Workers in HIV/AIDS, Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Prosperity Now, Unitarian Universalist for Social Justice, Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals, Operation Restoration, Collaborative Solutions, CommonSpirit Health, ICNA Council for Social Justice, American Association of Service Coordinators, African American Health Alliance

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THE ENDING HOMELESSNESS ACT OF 2021

Section 1. Short Title

- This section establishes the short title of the bill as the “Ending Homelessness Act of 2021.” (Waters)

Section 2. Expansion of housing choice voucher program.

- *Funding.* Appropriates for each of the fiscal years 2022 to 2025 the amount necessary to fund incremental vouchers allocated under this section, annual voucher renewal costs, and administrative fees for vouchers allocated under this section.
- *Eligible Households.* Households are eligible to receive rental assistance under this section if they have incomes at or below half of the extremely low-income threshold or have incomes below the extremely low-income threshold and include a household member who is a recipient of Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- *Allocation.* HUD will allocate 500,000 vouchers in fiscal year 2022, and 1,000,000 in each calendar year from 2023 through 2025

Section 3. Entitlement program for housing choice vouchers.

- *Entitlement.* Beginning in fiscal year 2026, families meeting certain income thresholds will be entitled to receive a Housing Choice Voucher.
- *Funding.* For fiscal year 2026 and each fiscal year after, amounts necessary shall be appropriated from the Treasury to fund the Housing Choice Voucher entitlement program and voucher administrative fees.
- *Qualified Families.* From fiscal year 2026 through fiscal year 2030, families meeting certain income thresholds would become entitled to receive a Housing Choice Voucher.
- *Small Area Fair Market Rents.* Public housing agencies would be required to use small area fair market rents to determine the payment standard for Housing Choice Vouchers to ensure families have the ability to move to or remain in higher cost housing markets.
- *Project-Basing.* A public housing agency may project base Housing Choice Vouchers under the entitlement program and is not limited in the number of vouchers it may project base. A voucher holder living in a project-based voucher unit may, at any time, request a mobile tenant-based voucher.
- *Administrative Fees.* HUD would establish a new administrative fee that reflects local variation in the cost of administering a voucher program and which encourages public housing agencies to expand housing choice for assisted families.

Section 4. Repeal of ineligibility criteria.

- This section would prohibit public housing agencies for screening out voucher applicants or terminating voucher assistance based on a person’s criminal or drug history.

Section 5. Prohibiting housing discrimination based on source of income and veteran status.

- This section would amend the Fair Housing Act of 1968 to add source of income and veteran status as protected classes under the Act. This section also authorizes \$137 million over 10 fiscal years to increase State and local fair housing enforcement capacity, and authorizes \$3 million for a 3-year national media campaign to raise public awareness of people's expanded fair housing rights and how to file housing discrimination complaints.

Section 6. Funding to address unmet need.

Homeless Assistance Funding

- *Appropriation of Funds.* Appropriates \$1 billion annually, not otherwise appropriated for each of the fiscal years 2020 through 2024, for emergency relief grants to address the unmet needs of people experiencing homelessness, particularly in jurisdictions with the highest need.
- *Allocation of Funds.* Instructs the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary, in consultation with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to establish a formula for allocating the grant amounts that takes into account the following factors: (A) poverty rates; (B) shortages of affordable and available housing for low, very low, and extremely low income households; (C) the number of overcrowded housing units; (D) the numbers of people experiencing unsheltered and chronic homelessness; and (E) any other factors determined appropriate. Requires that the formula be devised swiftly and that the distribution of grant funding be within 30 days after establishment of the formula.
- *Targeting Chronic Homelessness.* Requires that no less than 75 percent of the funding be used to create new permanent supportive housing (PSH), including capital costs, rental subsidies, and services. Allows the HUD Secretary to waive this requirement if the applicant can demonstrate that they have functionally ended chronic homelessness in their community, or that the PSH currently under development is sufficient to functionally end chronic homelessness once such units are available for occupancy.
- *Administrative Costs.* Allows for no more than five percent of the total amount of the grant to be used for administrative costs.
- *Promoting Housing First.* Directs the HUD Secretary to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that grantees are using a Housing First approach.
- *Ensuring Long-Term Effectiveness.* Provides that expiring contracts for leasing, rental assistance, or permanent housing funded by this section are eligible for contract renewals funded through the annual appropriations process.
- *Reporting.* Requires the HUD Secretary and USICH to provide reports to Congress on the design and implementation of the grant program as well as semiannual reports on progress being made, including description of the activities funded with the grant amounts. Allows the HUD Secretary to collect any information necessary to comply with the reporting requirements.

Outreach Funding

- *Appropriation of Funds.* Appropriates \$100 million annually, not otherwise appropriated for each of the fiscal years 2020 through 2024, for grants to provide outreach and coordinate services for people experiencing homelessness.
- *Allocation of Funds.* Directs the HUD Secretary to make the grants on a competitive basis and shall give priority to applicants who submit plans to make innovative and effective use of staff funded with the grant amounts. Requires that the criteria for the competition be devised swiftly and that the distribution of grant funding be within 30 days after establishment of the criteria.

Section 7. Housing Trust Fund.

- *Appropriation of Funds.* Appropriates \$1 billion annually, beginning in fiscal year 2019 and each fiscal year thereafter, for the Housing Trust Fund (HTF).

- *Ensuring Affordable Rents.* Limits the tenant rent contribution to 30 percent of adjusted income as defined by section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937. Directs the HUD Secretary to issue revised regulations within 90 days of enactment of this Act.
- *Ensuring Priority for the People Experiencing Homelessness.* Ensures priority for occupancy for dwelling units created with the first five years of funding be available for people experiencing homelessness as defined in section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Section 8. Technical assistance funds to help states and local organizations align health and housing systems.

- *Appropriation of Funds.* Appropriates \$20 million to provide technical assistance (TA) funding for HUD, in collaboration with USICH and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, to provide state- and local-level technical assistance in integrating and aligning policies and funding between Medicaid programs, behavioral health providers, and housing providers to creative supportive housing opportunities.
- *Allocation of Funds.* Requires that the priority of TA support shall be for states and localities that have the highest numbers of people experiencing chronic homelessness. Directs HUD to engage state Medicaid directors, governors, state housing and homelessness agencies, and any other relevant offices to assist states in increasing use of their Medicaid programs to finance supportive services for people experiencing homelessness.

Section 9. Permanent authorization of appropriations for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act grants.

- *Permanent Authorization.* Provides for a permanent authorization of appropriations for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance grants.

Section 10. Permanent extension of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.

- *Permanent Extension.* Provides for a permanent extension of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness by repealing the current sunset date.